

VZCZCXRO2330
OO RUEHGA RUEHHA RUEHIK RUEHPOD RUEHPW RUEHQU RUEHVC RUEHYG
DE RUEHOT #2326/01 3651300
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 311300Z DEC 07
FM AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7086
INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNCAN/ALL CANADIAN POSTS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 1329
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 0807
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 0154
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 0010
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM PRIORITY
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE PRIORITY 0110
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0367
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 0861
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 OTTAWA 002326

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [MARR](#) [PK](#) [AF](#) [CA](#)

SUBJECT: PM LINKS PAKISTAN TO AFGHAN MISSION; MEDIA COMMENT

11. (U) Summary: Prime Minister Harper joined other world leaders on December 27 in condemning the murder of Benazir Bhutto, stressing that Bhutto's death "cannot be allowed to permit any delay in the return of Pakistan to full democracy." Harper expressed concern about the implications of Bhutto's death on regional stability, and specifically on Afghanistan and the effort Canadian troops are making in Kandahar. News of Bhutto's assassination dominated the Canadian press, with commentary emphasizing the need to shore up democracy in Pakistan through elections. End summary.

PM CONDEMNS BHUTTO KILLING, EXPRESSES CONCERN ON REGIONAL STABILITY

12. (U) On December 27, Harper joined President Bush and other world leaders in condemning Benazir Bhutto's assassination. Harper emphasized that Bhutto's death "cannot be allowed to permit any delay in the return of Pakistan to full democracy, something the people of Pakistan have been waiting for far too long." The prime minister told reporters the world community has two roles to play in the aftermath of Bhutto's assassination -- to "offer our support and cooperation with the government of Pakistan and the authorities" and to "continue to press the government to continue on the path of restoring full democracy." Speaking to reports in Calgary, Harper also expressed concern about regional stability and its impact on "the valiant efforts" Canadian forces are making in Afghanistan, saying the government has been concerned about events "undermining democracy and stability" in Pakistan for several months. In November, Canada joined with other Commonwealth countries to suspend Pakistan's membership in the organization in response to President Musharraf's imposition of emergency rule and jailing of opponents.

CANADIAN PRESS COMMENTS ON BHUTTO MURDER

13. (U) All major Canadian newspapers dedicated their key editorials to the situation in Pakistan. The centrist Globe and Mail comments that Bhutto's assassination could give Mr. Musharraf the "pretext he needs" to again declare marshal

law, but urges that "the election should proceed, and Ms. Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party should demand nothing less."

The editorial stresses that the election scheduled for January 8, "damaged though it may be, represents an act of defiance against those who would lead Pakistan into darkness."

¶4. (U) The left-of-center Toronto Star argues that delaying the election "by weeks, not months" would be justified if more time is needed to establish the conditions necessary to hold a democratic election. The newspaper comments that, just like in Afghanistan, "there is no pure military solution" along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. It emphasizes that a political solution requires the legitimacy of a democratic government in Pakistan.

¶5. (U) The National Post, a conservative national daily, comments that Bhutto's death cast a "dark cloud over Afghanistan" where Canadian troops are "locked in a protracted war." The Post says the fact that Bhutto's "voice has now been silenced will not only make democratic reform in her own country more difficult, but in Afghanistan, too."

¶6. (U) The Ottawa Citizen underlines that world leaders must make it clear that they will not tolerate President Musharraf using Bhutto's assassination to "justify his police state" or "exploit, for personal political gain, the death of his rival." The daily remarks that "we in the insulated West" do not "have the luxury" of ignoring Pakistan. Pakistan is "teetering," the editorial states, and "if it falls the pieces will come flying in our direction."

COMMENT

OTTAWA 00002326 002 OF 002

¶7. (SBU) With analysts suggesting that Pakistani instability could embolden extremists on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border and further endanger Canadian troops in Afghanistan, developments in Pakistan will likely weigh on Canada's national debate and upcoming parliamentary vote on whether to extend its mission in Kandahar from February 2009 to 2011. While regional instability could make Canada's NATO allies less likely to deploy troops to southern Afghanistan, bolstering assertions that Canada should not extend its mission as it is sharing too much of the burden in Afghanistan, Pakistani volatility could also strengthen the conservative government's argument that it is imperative that Canadian troops stay the course in Afghanistan.

Visit Canada's Economy and Environment Forum at <http://www.intelink.gov/communities/state/canada>

BREESE